

TESTIMONY

CONGRESSMAN ADRIANO ESPAILLAT (NY-13)

House Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies

March 26, 2019

The Honorable David Price
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington D.C. 20515

RE: Written Testimony of Congressman Adriano Espaillat (NY-13) to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies.

Dear Chairman Price and Ranking Member Diaz Balart,

Chairman Price, Ranking Member Diaz-Balart, and distinguished Members of the Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee; Thank you for the opportunity to offer my concerns and priorities for New York's 13th Congressional District. As New York City's only member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I felt it was important to share with you some of our priorities for the city's transportation needs.

First and foremost, I appreciate the committee's continued bipartisan support of Capital Investment Grants despite the Trump Administration's repeated attempts to eliminate or cut the program. I have joined with my colleagues Earl Blumenauer and Jackie Walorski in leading a letter from dozens of members on both sides of the aisle in support of the program. It is critical for New York's ability to get projects big and small off the ground. A major one, the extension of the Second Avenue Subway north to Harlem, will eliminate a persistent transit desert and alleviate other overcrowded subway lines, while bringing hundreds of good-paying jobs and supporting many small businesses in underserved communities. CIG has also helped the city implement Bus Rapid Transit lines, which greatly improves commuter experiences in areas not served by our subway system.

I must voice my support for finding a way to fund the Gateway project, particularly the Hudson Tunnel project. We're approaching a serious point – after which there is no going back. If one of these tunnels fails or has to be taken out of service, it will cost the federal government billions of dollars. So regardless of the president's desire to use the project as a political football, we, the federal government, will be paying for the consequences. We can either pay for new, functioning critical infrastructure, or we can pay for our own inability to address this issue. I believe Congress must take the responsible route and find a way to get the federal share of this project funded.

Moving from Transportation, I would like to discuss the needs of public housing. New York City is home to the largest Public Housing Authority in North America known as NYCHA. NYCHA is responsible for over 176,000 public housing apartments serving almost 400,000 authorized residents. NYCHA serves low-income tenants including recipients of the Housing Choice Voucher Program; Project Based Vouchers; and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing HUD programs.

For NYCHA to effectively serve its tenants, it requires a commitment to robust funding from the Public Housing Operating Fund. For the day-to-day operations and long-term projects, rehabilitation, and modernization to take place, these funds are vital to the efforts already underway and those that are planned for. I urge this committee to wholly reject the Administration's FY2020 HUD Budget proposal eliminate funding of the Public Housing Capital Fund and instead build on the amount provided in FY2019 and continue to provide robust support and funding above the enacted level in this critical account.

In New York City, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) have in coordination with city agencies been applied to the repair of over 19,000 households through NYCHAs Rehab and Resilience program to single-family and multi-family homes. This resource has served my constituents and New York City and I urge continued support. Given the spate of natural disasters that we have seen in the mainland U.S. and impacting our fellow U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico, I want to lend my strong support for the Community Development Block Grant Program for Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR). Through the course of the recovery efforts that have taken place in Puerto Rico and continue to this day, I want to make sure that the distinguished Chairman and Ranking Member know how vital a resource this is to Puerto Rico and our fellow citizens as they recover and rebuild.

On behalf of my constituents in New York 13th Congressional District, I sincerely appreciate your thoughtfulness and consideration of these concerns and priorities. Thank you and have a good day.